

TITLE: Bestiary of Intelligence Writing

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# STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE

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*Confusion is probably  
almost inevitable*

## BESTIARY OF INTELLIGENCE WRITING \*

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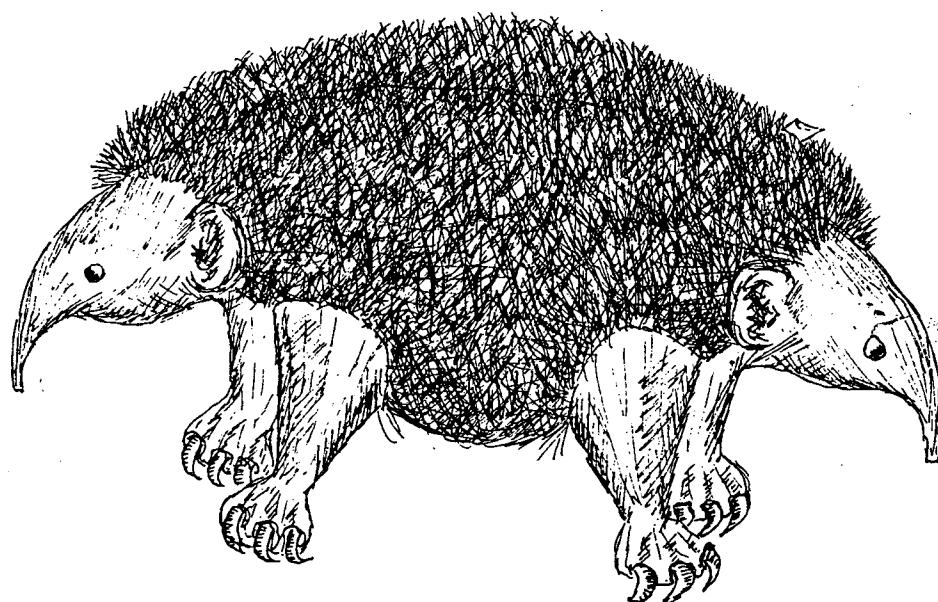
Older employees may recall that when the Headquarters Building was being constructed, guard dogs stalked the corridors by night to sniff out trespassers. Practically no one is aware, however, of the collection of strange fauna in a corner of a sub-basement, the location of which must remain secret. This collection, known as the Bestiary of Intelligence Writing, consists of specimen samples of cliches and misused or overused word combinations that CIA editors have encountered frequently over the years.

Now, for the first time, the Curator of the Collection has received permission to reveal the existence of the Bestiary and identify some of its principal specimens for the enlightenment, education, and general edification of CIA writers. It is hoped that with their new awareness of the Bestiary, analysts and other authors will keep their eyes peeled, noses to the grindstone, and ears to the ground, to call the attention of editors to other candidates for possible inclusion in the collection.

### The Collection

1. Multidisciplinary analysis
2. Viable alternatives
3. Mounting crises
4. Parameters
5. Heightened tensions
6. Dire straits
7. Far-reaching implication
8. Available evidence
9. Foreseeable future
10. Almost inevitable
11. Nonstarter
12. Economic constraints
13. Broad outlines
14. Net effect
15. Overwhelming majority

\* Apologies to *A Political Bestiary*, by Eugene McCarthy, James J. Kilpatrick, and Jeff MacNelly.



Multidisciplinary analysis, once a euphemism for the school of psychoanalysis whose treatment utilizes certain perversions, has gained new respectability since being applied to intelligence zoology. In this animal world, the multidisciplinary analysis has been around for years but has only recently been "discovered" as a species separate from other kinds of analysis.\* A multidisciplinary analysis looks like two or more conventional one-dimensional analyses welded together. It appears rather unkempt, with lots of loose ends hanging here and there, and its surfaces have a sticky substance that allows extraneous materials to adhere. Because of its variegated aspect, it appears to have more depth than its one-dimensional cousins.

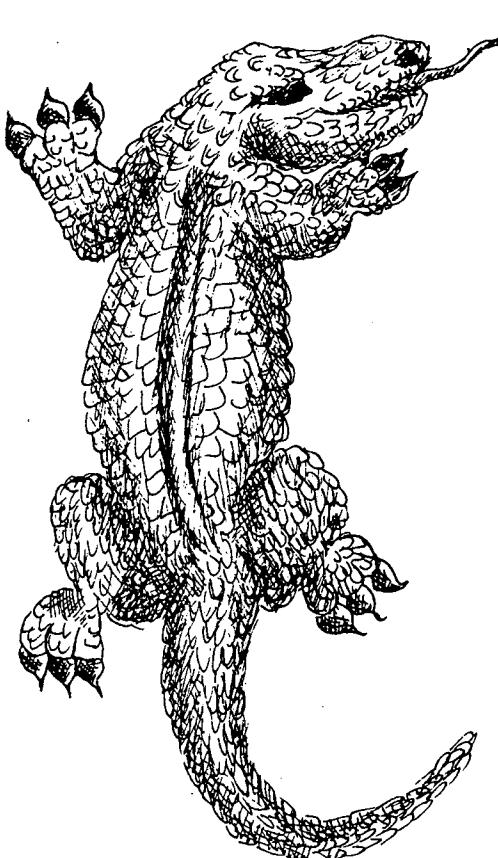
Multidisciplinary analysis has begun to flourish to an unprecedented degree in recent months and has largely swept its conventional cousins into the trash bin of history. Some who prefer the clean lines of conventional analysis are not certain this trend is a good thing. Multidisciplinary analysis heretofore was a hybrid, the fruit of the casual mating of standard forms of analysis; some scientists doubt the survivability of a multidisciplinary analysis arrived at through forced breeding. Others argue that multidisciplinary analysis is the wave of the future ("Ordnung und Multidiziplin muessen sein!") and proclaim that it is really something more (Ueberanalyse) than the sum of its parts.

\* Zoological historians disagree over where multidisciplinary analysis first appeared, but most believe it evolved in North America in the second half of the twentieth century. Some believe that Dr. Rube Goldberg was its Gregor Mendel.

**Bestiary**

Viable alternatives, nature's born troubleshooters, are moody and shy. They wander off when times are good because governments and officials tend to ignore them; when times are bad, officials are dismayed to discover that they don't have any. Analysts sometimes confuse viable alternatives with their

more common cousins, plain alternatives, which often tempt troubled officials with false solutions. Unlike viable alternatives, regular alternatives are less shy and never go away, even when officials continually reject them. Officials as well as analysts often cannot differentiate between the two sub-species until their advice has been tried and judged.

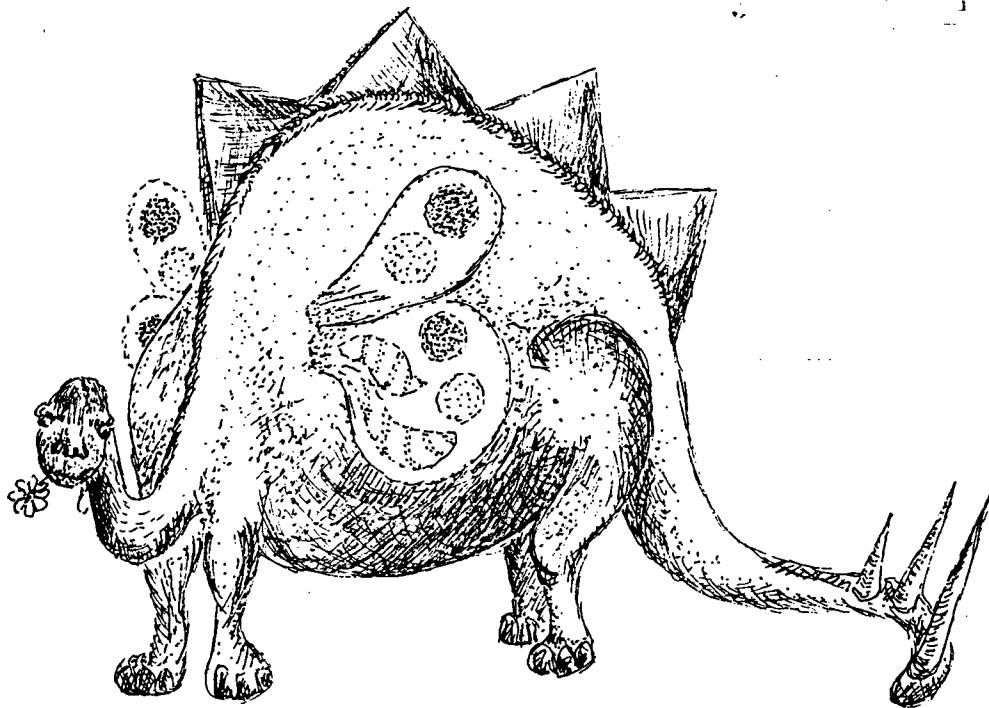


No one has discovered the origin of viable alternatives. Some scientists believe their propagation is by parthenogenesis because viable alternatives tend to be mutually exclusive and have never been known to mate. Others suspect that viable alternatives may be related to problems because problems occasionally suggest viable alternatives.

There is even learned disagreement over the origin of the word "viable." Novice analysts often believe the word derives from and combines with the Latin *via*, meaning *by way of*, and *bull*. Others see the Latin root as modifying the noun in the sense of, in this case, an alternative that succeeds. But this imparts a whiff of ex-post-factoism unworthy of the true analyst. Experienced analysts avoid the issue.

*Bestiary*

Mounting crises are frequently detected by intelligence analysts, but genuine crises are rare, and most sightings probably are of the larval form, known as problems and difficulties.\* Most crises are of the political or economic gender, but occasionally the sighting of a military (or of an even rarer, social) crisis is claimed. Crises tend to shun each other's company, although political and economic crises sometimes go hand in hand. Because they are almost impossible to identify when young (chicken sexers have the best record) and grow slowly, crises are almost always seen as mounting. They are never observed dismounting, and their decease remains an enigma to analysts. There is considerable non-scientific thinking about how they end their days: some believe that crises disappear, dissolve, evaporate, or "are resolved."



\* Learned literature is not wholly agreed that problems and difficulties are a larval form of crises. There appears to be an ample body of evidence that problems and difficulties can develop into crises, but it is equally obvious that not all do so. Some observers argue, in fact, that crises must be a separate species because while governments never want to have crises around, they appear, for some reason, to tolerate problems and difficulties, perhaps to create an image of activity and a *raison d'être*.

*Bestiary*

extension. Some of the supposed greater deterrent effect of parameters stems from the awe they inspire in the analyst and, he hopes, in the reader. Because no one—until this writing—was sure what parameters were, people have been content to observe them, once in place, rather than to challenge them.

As their name suggests, parameters invariably exist as pairs; a solitary unimeter does not exist in nature. Their method of reproduction is somewhat obscure; they are probably androgynous but are never heard of until somebody “sets” them. Nor is their decease well understood: once they are “set,” they are never unset, and they apparently are left in place to be forgotten.

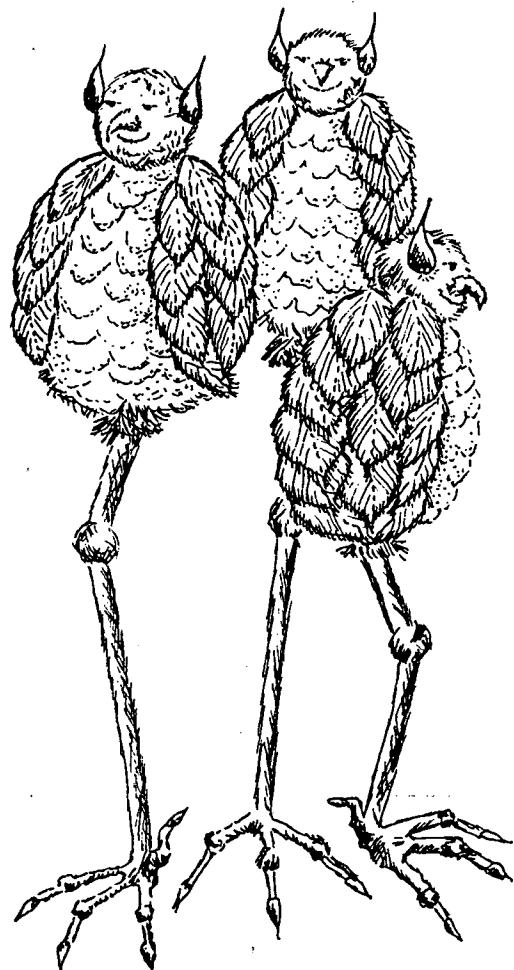
Parameters, beloved of defense specialists and bureaucrats in general, are the watchdogs of analysts who like to think “big thoughts.” Legless creatures, parameters must be “established” by the analyst, who typically places them at the fringes of activity, more to keep the activity from straying than to prevent infiltration from the outside.

Parameters are the next evolutionary development of limits, which have existed for centuries but which tend to be common, colorless, and susceptible to over-



*Bestiary*

Heightened tensions are easily recognized by their elongated shape—conventional tensions teetering about on stilts. In the previous century, heightened tensions were almost always military and observable only in the narrow no-man's land on the borders between countries. In recent decades, however, they have assumed more of a political character (less frequently, an economic or social character) and may be found wherever there are masses of people.



Heightened tensions are the adult form of conventional tensions—tensions that have acquired stilts by thriving on a rich diet of poverty, malnutrition, and especially alienation. Heightened tensions, like some other species in this Bestiary, exist only in the plural form and, rather than breed, seem to spring like maggots from the aforementioned dietary components. Their growth potential appears unlimited, and some analysts have reported heightened tensions heightening again and again.

*Bestiary*

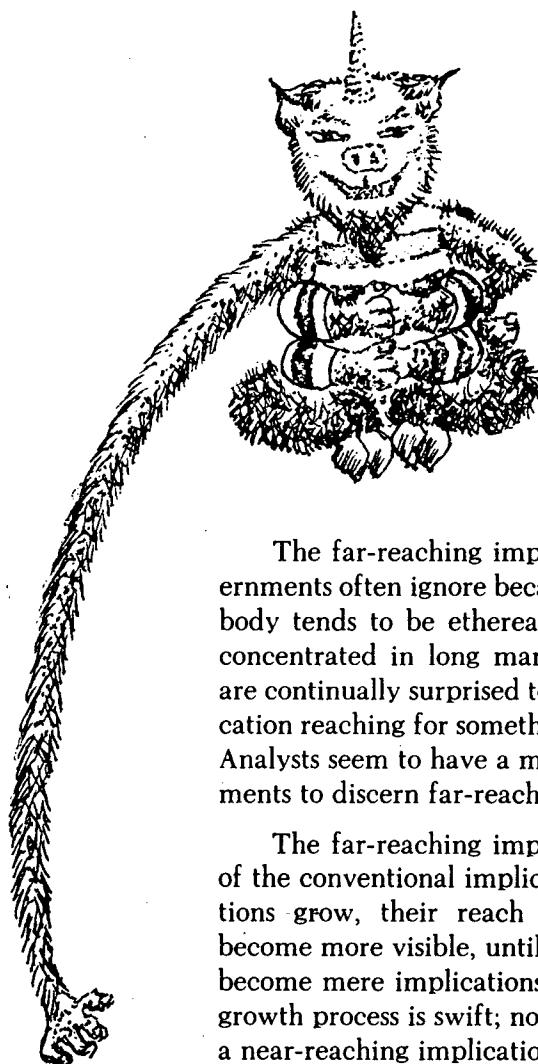
Dire straits are another of nature's unpleasant beasties, notable primarily for their large mouths, voracious appetites, and penchant for ambushing the unwary. Frivolous governments, heedless of where they are treading, often find themselves suddenly in dire straits. Rescue is invariably difficult and unpleasant.\*

Dire straits come in several genders, but dire economic straits are more common than the political, military, or social varieties. Dire straits are an

extremely social species: they always are observed in groups of two or more and never as a single strait. Nevertheless, they have never been observed to mate, and the method of their propagation remains a mystery.



\* Viable alternatives are the natural enemies of dire straits. Governments escape dire straits when they have viable alternatives. The conflict is bloody, prolonged, and often seemingly in doubt. Although viable alternatives always prevail, the conflict is fatal to both parties.



The far-reaching implication is an animal that governments often ignore because of its odd physiognomy: its body tends to be ethereal, and most of its substance is concentrated in long mandibles, or arms. Governments are continually surprised to discover a far-reaching implication reaching for something embarrassing or dangerous. Analysts seem to have a much better ability than governments to discern far-reaching implications.

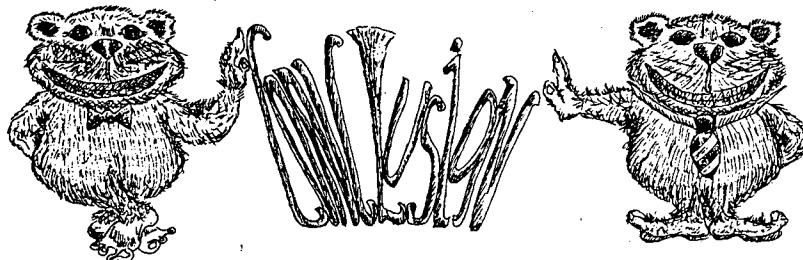
The far-reaching implication is the adolescent form of the conventional implication. As far-reaching implications grow, their reach gradually shortens, and they become more visible, until they are easily seen by all and become mere implications. The loss of mandibles in this growth process is swift; no one, in fact, has ever observed a near-reaching implication.

*Bestiary*

One of the most awe-inspiring creatures is the available evidence, sometimes called the available information, which intelligence analysts frequently use to support shaky conclusions. This vital and difficult task is accomplished with utmost tact—"available evidence suggests . . ." The careless analyst sometimes asserts mistakenly that available evidence "indicates," not realizing that only full-fledged evidence can provide this degree of support. Analysts should be more appreciative of the available evidence's propping up ability and realize the difficulty they would be in without it.

As the name implies, available evidence is always nearby, whereas regular evidence may be off somewhere unaware that its presence is needed. A shy creature, an available evidence always slips away quietly once regular evidence arrives either to solidify the conclusion or sweep it away.

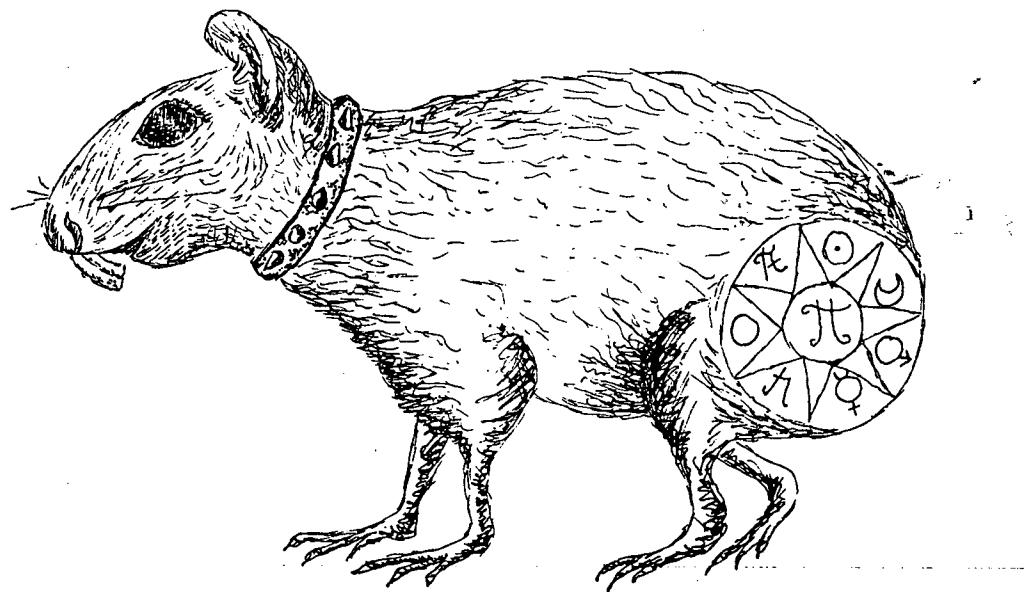
There was once a widely held view, now articulated only by purists, that available evidence is not a sub-species of evidence, that in fact there is only evidence or the lack thereof. Whatever evidence exists, they argue, is by definition available and, therefore, does not need to be so labeled. Modern research has disproved this myth, for we know now that unavailable evidence exists—it is somewhere else.



*Bestiary*

Foreseeable futures are the favorite pets of political and economic forecasters. No forecaster dares to be caught without one, and a forecaster with an obedient foreseeable future is admired by all.

They are moody and dangerous animals, however, and frequently turn upon their masters, causing them great public humiliation, derision, and grief. That such a disagreeable beast enjoys privileged status in society is testimony to its great prestige. The more professional futurists, however, such as weather



forecasters and most political analysts, have nothing to do with foreseeable futures. And, despite their name, these beasts are not suitable as seeing eye companions.

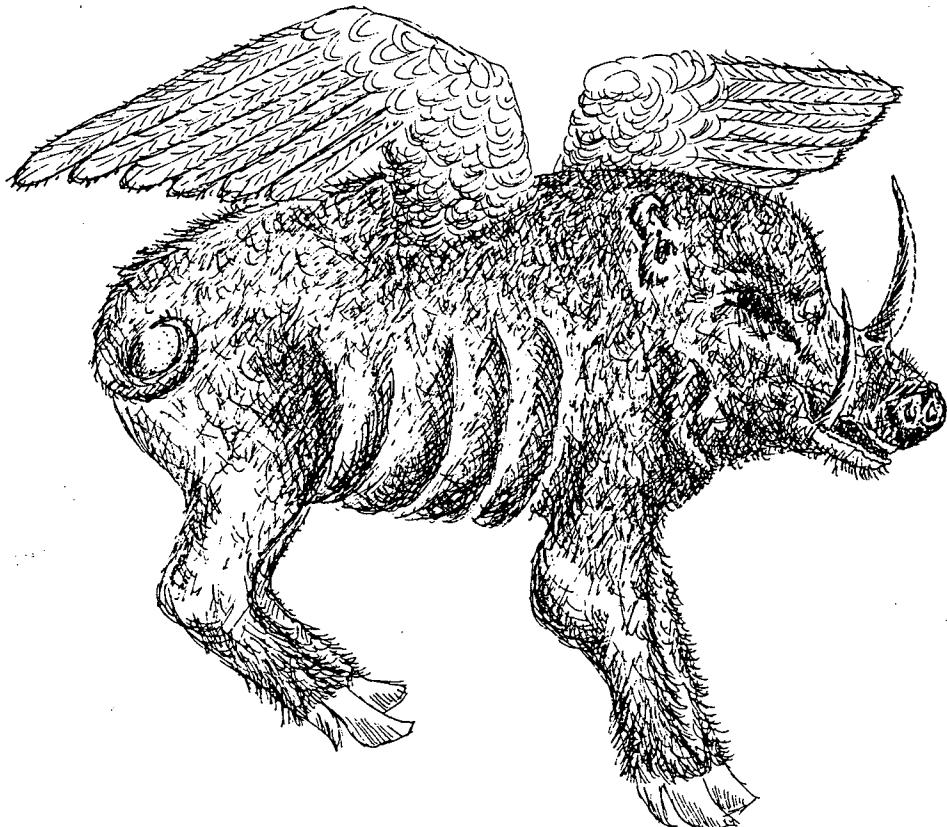
Most analysts, however, play around with regular futures, a less mercurial, related species that can still be misleading and dangerous. Economic analysts in particular often deal with pork belly futures and soy bean futures because of their occasional ability to sniff out hidden wealth. These futures, despite their names, are totally unrelated to foreseeable futures, although they are dangerous in their own right.

**Bestiary**

The almost inevitable, cousin to the virtually certain, is an indoor pest of the genus *eventuality* that has defied man's eradication efforts since the Dawn of Time. Curiously, many people have never seen an almost inevitable—because of its nocturnal habits—and some have labeled as almost inevitable things that really are not. The name has become synonymous with everything disagreeable—when faced with such prospects as death and taxes, people will throw up their hands and exclaim that "they're almost inevitable."

Some people argue, no doubt because it is so seldom seen, that the almost inevitable does not really exist. They maintain that the life cycle of the *eventuality* consists of only three stages—the possible, probable, and inevitable—and that there is no gradation between probable and inevitable. Some of our era's more thoughtful thinkers and editors, however, recognize the separate existence of the probably inevitable, a distinctive distinction that is lost on most people.

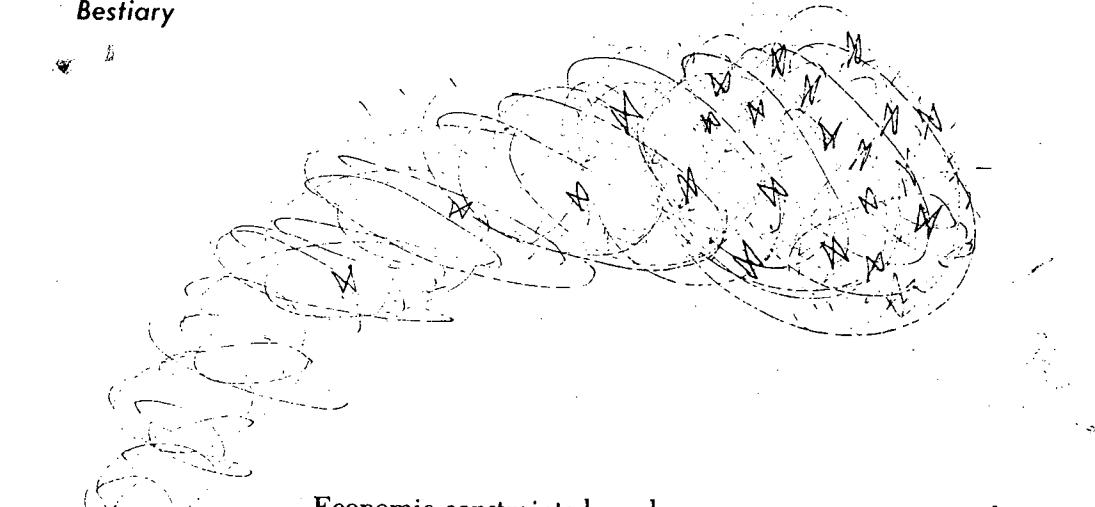
Such confusion is probably almost inevitable.





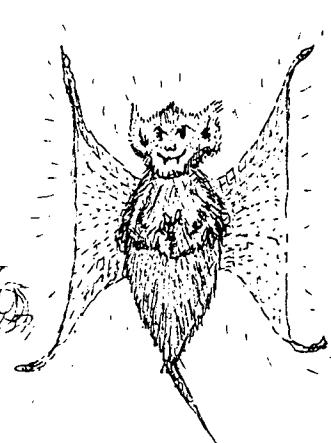
Analysts and bookies are fond of ferreting out nonstarters, those unfortunate beasts that because of their physiognomy are destined never to enter, much less win, a contest. Their desire to compete is intense, however, and because of their marvelous faculty for disguise, they love to mingle with genuine starters and confuse the unwary. Journeymen analysts can quickly distinguish between starters and nonstarters: genuine starters have either wings so that they can fly or brass grommets so that they can be run up a flagpole and saluted. Congenital optimists, nonstarters are fond of consoling each other that they are merely ideas whose times have not yet come. In truth, however, they are often worn out or refurbished ideas and never were legitimate starters. One of nature's saddest species.

## Bestiary



Economic constraints have become a common pest in the 1980s after being introduced into this country following World War II by soldiers returning from Europe. Infestations are thickest around institutes dealing with the "Dismal Science," but swarms of a new strain, tentatively called political constraints, have been mentioned in recent political and intelligence literature. Some Pentagon analysts and observers even report a possible third mutation, the military constraint.

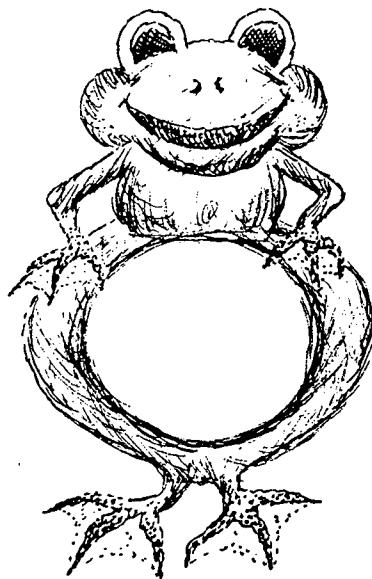
Swarming constraints tend to produce clouds so dense as to obscure vision. Governments and individuals so beset have no choice but not to do whatever they were planning to do. Deceitful governments, anxious for an excuse not to do something, sometimes blame the arrival of a swarm of constraints for their inaction, when in fact there are no mites in the vicinity.



Impervious to weather, constraints can appear in any season. On the other hand, they rarely appear in political seasons, probably because candidates at such times do not want to imply that their vision and scope of action are at all limited. Constraints, curiously, seem to increase in activity after elections. Behaviorists also note that although constraints swarm in any season, they are directly affected by the economic (or political) climate, thriving when it is poor and disappearing when it is good.

**Bestiary**

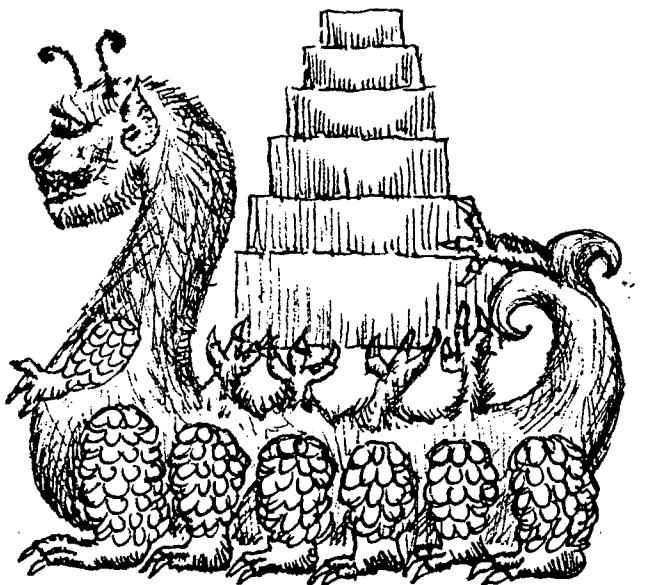
Broad outlines are gluttonous predators that feed on the imaginations of professors, students, and political analysts. Unique in the zoological kingdom because they grow from the outside in, broad outlines are conventional in most other ways—they are conceived and then carried to fruition unless they miscarry. As with humans, the process of conceiving broad outlines seems to be much more pleasurable than carrying them to fruition. There is a high infant mortality rate among broad outlines—they often fall prey to nonstarters—and many starve from lack of being filled in. Those that are lucky enough to be filled in discover, moreover, that people rapidly become more interested in the filling and quickly lose interest in the outlines.



Despite what their name implies, broad outlines do not share their phylum with what might be called narrow outlines. There are no such animals around today, nor is there any fossil evidence that any ever existed. The broad outlines' closest relatives are regular outlines, a modest, less impressive version. Broad outlines probably evolved out of regular outlines sometime in the past, the result of too rich a diet of academia nuts roasted in professorial hot air.

*Bestiary*

The net effect is a hybrid beast of burden developed by political scientists jealous of the net assessment that Secretary of Defense McNamara's "whiz kids" bred in the Pentagon basement in the early 1960s. The political analyst and his net effect quickly became an object of derision among economists and military analysts who looked down their noses at the beast as being too imprecise. In the last two decades, however, the net effect has popped up everywhere, and the net assessment is now found only in zoos and an occasional National Estimate.



The popularity of the net effect is obvious. Analysts quickly saw that its many long arms and legs would allow the net effect easily to wrap up data, draw bottom lines, summarize, conclude, and jump from fact to implication. Its genetic ancestor, the effect, could also do these things, but the addition of the net allowed the lazy and insecure analyst to imply more clearly to his supervisor that he was considering facts or trends on both sides of an issue.

The Russians are wont to claim discovery of the net effect, saying it is a contemporary manifestation of the thesis-antithesis-synthesis process discovered by Hegel and Marx which they apply scrupulously in solving all their problems. Until greater access to Soviet intelligence analysis allows an independent verification, this claim must be regarded as dubious.



The overwhelming majority is the best known of a species of draft animal used by many analysts to carry the burden of their argument and analysis. Its popularity stems from its versatility: it can believe, support, and advocate. It loves to vote, and polling organizations frequently cite it to support their conclusions. Garrulous and with an opinion on just about everything, overwhelming majorities seldom respond that they "have no opinion" or "don't know."

The species *majority* contains two sub-species: the *greater majority* (also known as the big or wide majority) and the *lesser majority* (sometimes called a narrow or thin majority). Overwhelming majorities are nothing more than overfed or overinflated *greater majorities*, which analysts mistakenly believe can do a job better because of their immense girth.\* In fact, overwhelming majorities often tend to be flabby, and the most effective majority frequently is the leaner, tougher *working majority*.

\* An overwhelming majority is called a consensus when it becomes so widespread that it is general. Perhaps for this reason some analysts occasionally talk about a general consensus. This is, of course, grossly inappropriate because contemporary consensuses are always anti-militaristic.